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DAVID'S LAMENT OVER SAUL AND JONATHAN:

II SAM. 1:19-27

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The limited measure of success hitherto attained in the attempts to solve difficulties in the Massoretic Text of this passage forms ample warrant for reconsidering the whole.

Difficulty begins with the opening term **הַצֶּבֶי**, which, with the four words immediately following, has sometimes been rendered 'The beauty (or 'The gazelle'), O Israel, upon thy heights [is] slain';¹ apart from the obscurity of this reading, however, it is to be noted that on this view the order of the words is unusual, for the predicate should normally come first, not last. Following the lead of the Septuagint translator, who has rendered the first word by *Στήλῳσον*, apparently thinking that it was a command to set up a pillar in memory of the two braves, some eminent critics (Klostermann, Nowack, Budde, H. P. Smith) prefer to regard the form as an imperative, which, in their opinion, was originally **הִעֲצֵבִי** ('Be thou grieved'). This form, however, is obviously feminine, and, if adhered to, would both require the associated noun ('O Israel'), contrary to all usage elsewhere, to be viewed as feminine instead of masculine, and necessitate the change of **בְּמוֹתָיָהּ** into **בְּמוֹתָיוָהּ**. But it appears more reasonable to assume that the original reading was **הַנְּצִיב**,² the ' at the end of the form in the received text being treated as a dittogram from the beginning of the word immediately following: the first three words then give the sense, 'Stand, O Israel, upon thy heights!' An imperative obviously accords better with the prohibitions in the next verse ('Tell not publish not').

The form **הִקְלֵל**,³ however, remains to be utilized. The context decidedly favors the view that this was originally a second impera-

¹ 'The beauty of Israel,' as a rendering of the first two words, cannot be accepted, inasmuch as the article would abnormally be attached to a construct noun.

² Driver fitly remarked that 'some corruption seems to underlie **הַצֶּבֶי**,' but he found himself unable to offer any solution of the difficulty.

³ It is more than probable that, in the course of manifold transcription, there has been assimilation of resemblant forms from really different roots: with this form, compare **הִקְלִים** in vs. 22, and **הִקְלֵל** in vs. 25.

tive, resembling it, viz. **הֵיִלֵּל** ('Wail!'). Such a command would fitly follow the first; yet, in view of the parallelism regulating the structure of Hebrew poetry, it would stand alone, if regard be had merely to the Massoretic Text. At this point, however, the reading of the Septuagint claims more serious consideration than it has generally received, and it will richly reward attention. A simple retranslation of the expression *ὑπὲρ τῶν τεθνηκότων σου* is **עַל־מָוֶתְךָ**, which, instead of being viewed as merely a various reading of **עַל־בְּמוֹתֶיךָ**, should be restored as the genuine reading in the latter portion of a second line, inadvertently omitted, however, because of its similarity to the close of the first.

As the result of these few changes, vs. 19 would run thus:

Stand, O Israel, upon thy heights!
Wail over thy dead!
[Crying] How mighty ones have fallen!

Vs. 20 does not call for emendation.

In vs. 21, the opening expression **הָרִי בְּגִלְבֹּעַ** is usually rendered, 'O ye mountains in Gilboa!' But two difficulties here present themselves: first, that Gilboa, though certainly a range of hills, is elsewhere called simply a 'mountain' (see vs. 6, and I Sam. 31:1); second, the unusual intervention of a preposition between the construct form and the noun on which it leans. Klostermann seems to look in the right direction when he proposes to read **הָרָבִי בְּגִלְבֹּעַ**; less exception, however, can be taken to the verb-form **הָרֹב**, which would make the expression mean, 'Be thou parched, O Gilboa!'

An obvious objection to the next clause **אַל־טֵל** is the want of a verb-form; the proposed insertion of **יֵרֵד** ('descend'), suggested by the Septuagint *katabarō*, certainly relieves the situation somewhat, yet the resultant meaning is not so satisfactory as is secured by inserting **יֵדֵל**, which, because of its obvious resemblance to the two forms adjacent, would very readily be omitted by a transcriber: the resultant meaning will now be, 'let not dew distil.' The third clause likewise lacks a verb-form, but the want may most simply and reasonably be supplied by writing the noun-form **בְּמָטָר** as the Niphal imperfect **יִמְטָר**, and giving this an impersonal sense ('let it not be rained'). Difficulty is next felt in accepting as correct the expression **שִׁירִי**

תְּרִימוֹת, which might most naturally be rendered 'fields of offerings,' i.e., fields from which choice offerings of first-fruits were obtained; change of the closing term, however, into the resemblant עֲרִמוֹת presents a less objectionable meaning, viz., 'fields of sheaves,' i.e., fields famed for producing grain in abundance. (Less suitable substitutes are רְבִייה or תְּרִמוֹת, both of which would make the expression signify 'fields of deceit.')

After the middle of the verse, difficulty appears in the expression, 'the shield of heroes, the shield of Saul'; by such an accumulation the line is obviously overloaded. One would expect that with the plural 'heroes' there should be associated the plural (construct) form 'shields' (viz., מִגְנֵי), for each man should have a shield; but when the whole case is considered, it would seem that an initial error was committed by an early transcriber in writing גִּבּוֹרִים instead of גִּבּוֹר, though the mention made, at the end of the verse, of an *individual* who had been anointed with oil should have prevented him from making such a mistake; after this error had been committed, however, a later transcriber deemed it necessary to insert, by way of explanation, the words, 'the shield of Saul.' To remove the words מִגְנֵן שָׂאוֹל as a gloss, and then reduce the preceding expression to the form מִגְנֵן גִּבּוֹר, brings the whole clause into a form ('for there, the shield of a hero was thrown aside' as a thing of naught) which commends itself.

The next clause, concluding the verse בְּלִי מִשִּׁיָּה בִּשְׁמֶנָּה ('not anointed with oil') has sometimes been regarded as referring to the *shield*, as by the Septuagint translator (*θυρεὸς Σαουλ οὐκ ἐχρίσθη ἐν ἐλαίῳ*), and by the majority of the late English Revisers whose rendering, in the text, is 'the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil'; in support of this view, citation is made of Isa. 25:5 and Judg. 22:14. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the verb מִשָּׁח mostly signifies anointing with holy oil, which was applied to consecrated *persons*, as priests (Exod. 28:41; 29:2; 40:15), prophets (I Kings 19:16; Isa. 61:1), kings (I Sam. 10:1; 15:1; I Kings 19:15), but also to consecrated things, as the altar and the vessels of divine service in the Tabernacle (Exod. 29:36; 30:26 ff.; 40:9, 10, 11, etc.). In a very few passages only can it be maintained that the verb is used to indicate anointing of common objects. The most reasonable view here

is to regard the words **בְּלִי מִשְׁיִיחַ** as a mistranscription of the resemblant **בְּלִי מִשְׁחָה**¹, and thus secure the appropriate meaning, 'the weapon of one anointed with oil.'

Vs. 22, as presented to us by the Massoretes, contains a large proportion of questionable forms and is thus hard to be understood. Most minds must feel difficulty in accepting what is stated in the common rendering,—

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Both father and son are clearly pictured here, not as brave and courageous, but rather as positively delighting in slaughter: even so, it is not easy to conceive how the 'bow' of Jonathan turned not back from the blood of the slain, and the sword of Saul did not return 'empty.' Considerable emendation must be made before suitable sense can be evolved.

Beginning with the middle of the verse, and setting aside the form **קֶשֶׁת** ('bow') for later consideration, let us content ourselves with the statement that 'Jonathan did not turn back' (or 'turn away'); here, however, the abnormal verb-form **נָשׁוּג** must be set aside in favor of the correct form **נָסוּג**, which, indeed, is found in many Hebrew MSS. Next, at the beginning of the verse, instead of **מִדָּם הַחֲלָלִים**, read the resemblant expression **מִדְּחֵי הַלְצִים**, which presents the appropriate statement that Jonathan did not draw back 'from the onset of those equipped' for fight. Then, by changing the first and the third words in the expression **מִיַּחֲלָב גְּבוּרִים קֶשֶׁת**, so that the whole may become **מִיַּחֲלָב גְּבוּרִים קֶשֶׁה**, there is obtained the fitting sense 'from the heavy² stroke of valiants.'

In the later portion of the verse, let the first form **וַיַּחַב** give place either to the similarly sounded **וַיִּקְרַב** or the resemblant form **וַיִּהְדֶּה**,³ so as to give the meaning 'and the attack (or 'onslaught') of Saul,' which will have to be treated as the *accusative* in its clause.

¹ This form of the participle is actually found in many Hebrew MSS.

² On the position of the attributive adjective, see König, *Syntax der hebr. Sprache*, § 334γ. It is assumed that a noun-form **הֶלֶם** ('blow' or 'stroke') was current in early times but afterward became obsolete.

³ The early existence of another noun-form, which afterward fell out of use, is once more assumed.

Finally, for the unsuitable words **לֹא תָשׁוּב יָרֵקָם**, substitute the resemblant forms **לֹא הָשָׁךְ הַפָּקָם**, 'their pressure did not restrain.' The character of the whole verse, thus changed, depicts the undaunted courage of Saul and Jonathan rather than delight in carnage.

Vs. 23. Some expositors, unable to resist the strong temptation to divide this verse into three equal parts, each containing four words in Hebrew, have made the whole run thus:

Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the pleasant,
In their lives and in their death were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

This arrangement, however, leaves something to be desired, particularly at the end of the second line, where it is stated that Saul and Jonathan at their death were not 'divided.' Greater brightness and freshness are secured, first, by treating the two forms in the expression **הַנְּאֻמִּים וְהַנְּעִימִים** as superlatives; and secondly, by substituting for **נִפְרְדִּי** ('separated') the resemblant **נִפְקְדִּי** ('sought for'), thus bringing out a contrast between the high esteem in which they were held during life and the disregard shown them at death. The whole verse may then be presented thus:

Saul and Jonathan [were] the most beloved and the dearest
in their lives,
[yet] in their death they were not cared for,—
[though] they had been swifter than eagles, were stronger
than lions.

Mention of the neglect of the bodies of Saul and his son on the battlefield, as now evolved, receives ample confirmation from the story in the preceding chapter (I Sam., chap. 31).

Vs. 24. Emendation is required at several points in this verse. First, the preposition **אֶל־** ('to') should be **עַל** ('over'), which was doubtless miswritten through the assimilating influence of the form **הַמְּלִבְשָׁם** immediately preceding. Next, the participle **יִשְׂרָאֵל** ('the one who clothed') should properly have the feminine suffix **ָ** instead of the masculine; moreover, the prefixed article is really unnecessary in the case of a word sufficiently defined already (but see Deut. 8:14; 13:6, 11; 20:1; Ps. 18:33; 81:11, etc.); here, however, it may be a dittogram from the end of the word preceding. Further, the expression **עִם־עֲדָנִים** ('together with pleasures') does

not suit the context and must be deemed a mistranscription of the resemblant עִם-סָרִינִים ('together with fine-linen garments'), as first suggested by Grätz and approved by later critics. In the last clause, instead of the construct singular in the expression עֲרֵי זָהָב, the original form was most probably the construct plural, עֲרֵי, which gives better sense ('ornaments of gold').

Vs. 25. After the fitting exclamation in the first part of this verse ('How heroes are fallen in the midst of the battle!'), the sudden change, in the lament, to address an individual in the second person is surprising—all the more surprising because another change is at once made, in the next verse, to apostrophize Jonathan the beloved; there is thus good reason for suspecting that the latter half of this verse (which some render, 'Jonathan upon thy high places [is] slain,' others, 'O Jonathan [thou wast] slain in thy high places') has been mistranscribed. By changing עַל-בְּמוֹתָיָהּ הָלַל into the resemblant expression נִגְעַל בְּמוֹתָיו פָּחַל, the concluding portion runs more fitly, thus: 'Jonathan was cast aside, when he died, as unclean.'

Vs. 26. The Massoretic readings in most of this verse may be accepted as correct, though possibly מֵאֵר, at the end of the verse, may be a transcriptional error for מֵאֶר, which would change the meaning from 'thou wast very dear to me,' into 'thou wast dearer to me than a brother.'

At the beginning of the second half, the peculiar form נִפְלְאָתָהּ is best explained as a compound, in one word, by a late transcriber of two conflate readings, viz., נִפְלְאָה and נִפְלְתָה, Niphal forms of פָּלַא and its cognate פָּלַה, both meaning 'to be wonderful'; similar mixed forms are הִתְבַּאֲתָהּ in Josh. 6:17, הִתְמַצְאִיָּהּ in Jer. 50:20, etc.

Vs. 27. In the last verse, beginning with the dying echo of the wail, 'How heroes have fallen!' one hardly expects to find, for a finish, lamentation over the perishing of 'weapons' of war—things rather than *persons*; to urge that Saul and Jonathan are poetically viewed as instruments of war is a very lame defense of the Massoretic reading. The form פָּלִי is rather to be regarded as a questionable form for which a better must be sought.

Guidance in the search for a more appropriate term is derived from a study of other passages. The latter portion of Gen. 7:14,

according to the received Hebrew text, runs so strangely—‘and all the fowl tribe after its kind, every bird, every wing’—that doubt may well be entertained regarding the correctness of the readings, particularly the threefold repetition of כָּל (‘all,’ or ‘every’). Most probably an early transcriber, after having *twice* written כָּל, unconsciously wrote this a third time also, instead of the correct resemblant כָּעַל; from this, כ first disappeared, because of its weakness in pronunciation,¹ and כ was next mistranscribed as כ; but when the concluding expression in Gen. 7:14 is read as כָּעַל כָּנָה (‘lord [or ‘possessor’] of a wing,’ having wings), the difficulty disappears, and the phrase falls into line with what is found in Prov. 1:17; Eccl. 10:20.²

In view of what has now been stated, it is safe to infer that the closing expression in this lament over Saul and Jonathan, viz., מְלִי מְלִיחָמָה should rather be כָּעַל מְלִיחָמָה (‘lords of battle,’ or ‘masters in war’).

On the basis of the textual corrections now suggested, the dirge will assume something like the following form:

19. Stand, O Israel, upon thy heights!
Wail over thy dead! [crying]
How heroes have fallen!
20. Tell it not in Gath!
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon!
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.
21. Be thou parched, O Gilboa!
Let not dew distil,
Nor let rain be poured on you,
or [on] the sheaf-producing fields;
For there, the shield of a hero was thrown aside,
the weapon of one anointed with oil.
22. From the onset of the equipped,
From the heavy stroke of heroes,
Jonathan turned not aside,
And their pressure restrained not the attack of Saul.
23. Saul and Jonathan, the most beloved and the dearest in their lives,
in their death were not cared for;
[though] they had been swifter than eagles, were stronger than lions.

¹ Cf. כָּל, the name of the Babylonian deity, abbreviated from כָּעַל (Heb. כָּעַל), in Isa. 46:1; Jer. 50:2, etc.

² The same correction should be made in Ezek. 39:4.

24. O ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul!
 Who clothed you with scarlet and fine undergarments,
 Who laid ornaments of gold on your clothing.
25. How heroes have fallen in the midst of the battle!
 Jonathan was cast aside, when he died, as unclean!
26. I am distressed over thee, my brother!
 O Jonathan, thou wast dearer to me than a brother;
 Thy love to me was wonderful,—
 more than the love of women.
27. How heroes have fallen,
 And lords of battle perished!